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GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 51/45 L of 10 December 1996, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to examine the issue of assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them; encouraged him to continue his efforts, in the context of the implementation of resolution 49/75 G of 15 December 1994 and of the recommendations of the United Nations advisory missions, to curb the illicit circulation of small arms and to collect such arms in the affected States that so request, with the support of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and in close cooperation with the Organization of African Unity; and requested him to report to the Assembly at its fifty-second session. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

II. FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

2. The Secretary-General welcomes the attention the General Assembly has been devoting to this important subject, which affects the stability of many countries.

3. The recent experience of Mali illustrates the possibilities for progress that are available once Governments demonstrate the necessary political will to tackle the complex issues involved. In March 1997, the Secretary-General sent a senior official to Bamako to represent him at official ceremonies commemorating

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the first anniversary of the "Flame of Peace" organized in Timbuktu, Mali, on 27 March 1996, at which thousands of small arms handed over by ex-combatants of the armed movements of northern Mali were publicly destroyed. The Secretary-General expresses his hope that the process started by Mali will contribute towards effective measures to control and eliminate the illicit circulation of weapons throughout the region.

4. The Secretary-General looks forward to the implementation by interested African States of a moratorium on import, export and manufacture of light weapons. The proposal was adopted first in November 1996 at an international conference on Conflict Prevention, Disarmament and Development in West Africa. The Conference, held in Bamako, was organized by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), the Department for Political Affairs of the Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in cooperation with the Government of Mali. In March 1997, ministerial-level consultations were held in Bamako among Algeria, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal. The consultations were observed by representatives of the Department of Political Affairs/Centre for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat, the Organization of African Unity, the Accord de Non-Agression et d'Assistance en Matière de Défense, the Chairman of the Wassenaar Group, the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and the Canadian International Development Agency. These consultations resulted in the adoption of a document for the declaration of a moratorium, including the establishment of a mechanism called the Programme for Coordination and Assistance on Disarmament and Security.

5. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 51/45 L, the Secretary-General has not received any specific request for United Nations assistance to curb the illicit circulation of small arms and to collect such arms in the affected States. Should such requests be received in the future, he would consider them carefully, in cooperation with the States and regional organizations concerned.